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# Ex-CIA Agent Suspected of Spying Seemed Unexceptional to Associates

## *Young New Mexico Economist Lived Quietly, Conventionally*

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By T.R. Reid
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SANTE FE, N.M., Oct.3—To friends and colleagues here, Edward Lee Howard seemed a standard Santa Fe-style yuppie: a respected $32,000-a-year economic analyst with the state government who commuted in a bright red Jeep to his brown adobe house in a middle-income development south of town.

Neighbors said he was a dutiful husband to his wife, Mary, a dental assistant in Santa Fe, and a devoted father to his 2-year-old son.

He enjoyed flying radio-controlled model aircraft and target-shooting at a local gun club—hardly remarkable pastimes for a young professional in the Southwest.

"He did good work," said Steven Arias, clerk of the New Mexico Legislature, where Howard was employed as a natural-resources economist with the Legislative Finance Committee.

He did good work through the afternoon of Sept. 20, when he briefed legislators at a budget-analysis meeting in the state capitol, then slipped quietly away and vanished.

In Washington today, a Senate staff official described Howard as a low-level officer in the CIA's clandestine service who was fired by the agency in 1983 for undisclosed reasons and apparently took sensitive material with him, perhaps to sell it to Soviet intelligence agents.

David Holliday of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence also said that, based on briefings received by the panel, he "would not discourage" speculation that high-level Soviet intelligence defector Vitaly Yurchenko had identified Howard as a spy.

Yurchenko, a former ranking member of the KGB who defected two months ago, is being debriefed by the Central Intelligence Agency at an undisclosed location near Washington.

Holliday said he could not identify what Howard may have taken when he left the agency. But a warrant used here to search Howard's home and car indicated that federal officials were seeking coding materials, transmitting and recording equipment, and business cards carrying microdots.

A second former CIA employe is reportedly under surveillance as a possible Soviet agent, apparently also based on information from Yurchenko, a federal official said today in Washington.

Two days after Howard slipped away, a passenger listed as "Edward Howard" took an American Airlines flight from Albuquerque to Dallas. The next morning, Sept. 23, the Federal Bureau of Investigation issued an arrest warrant for the fugitive analyst but, by then, he was gone.

News that this quiet, generally mild-mannered young economist might have been a U.S. agent working for the KGB stunned and electrified his coworkers here. Equally surprised, evidently, was Howard's wife.

Philip Baca, Howard's boss in the state government, said he came into his office on the night of Sept. 22 and found a letter of resignation from Howard. In it, Howard asked coworkers to clean out his desk and said he hoped "some day to be able to explain this to you and the rest of the staff."

Baca said he immediately called Howard's home and reached Mary Howard. He said she expressed astonishment that her husband had quit his job and seemed to have no idea of his whereabouts.

Federal officials here declined to discuss how long they had been watching Howard and why he was able to leave Santa Fe before an arrest warrant was issued.

Coworkers and neighbors said FBI agents were in Santa Fe asking questions about Howard in the days before he fled. They said he must have known this by the day he left work early and disappeared.

Federal law enforcement officials say Howard fled Sept. 21. He was able to escape, a federal official in Washington said, because the FBI maintained a limited surveillance until an arrest warrant was issued.

Federal agents have staked out Howard's home and begun trailing his wife on her daily commute from home to the orthodontist's office where she works.

Howard was born in Alamagordo, N.M., in 1951, son of a career Air Force sergeant. The family moved frequently during his boyhood, and he acquired a proficiency in Spanish and German.

After graduating from the University of Texas in 1972, he spent most of the next four years with the Peace Corps in South America and the United States. From 1976 to 1979, he worked in Peru for the Agency for International Development, according to the State Department.

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After earning a master's degree in business administration from American University, he went to work for the CIA, where he was employed from 1981 until spring 1983.

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In June 1983, he moved to Santa Fe. His coworkers said they did not know what prompted the move.

He applied for a job as an analyst with the state Legislative Finance Committee, a joint budget-planning body serving both chambers of the legislature. He told his bosses that he had been employed by the State Department but left State because he and his wife did not want to accept an imminent posting to Moscow.

It is fairly common for CIA covert operatives to work under diplomatic cover for the State Department.

As an analyst in the Capitol building here, Howard seemed to coworkers to be a solid, serious young man.

The only stain on his record here came in February 1984 when he was arrested for brandishing a .44-cal. pistol at three men in downtown Santa Fe. He told police that he had been distraught after a family argument and had too many drinks at a bar. In a plea bargain, he pleaded guilty to an assault charge and was sentenced to probation.

As part of the bargain, Howard obtained letters of support from several government officials here and in Washington. All described him as a reliable, serious individual.

"He is a dedicated, honest and truthful individual," wrote then-state Sen. Frank Papen, chairman of the committee for which Howard worked.

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